

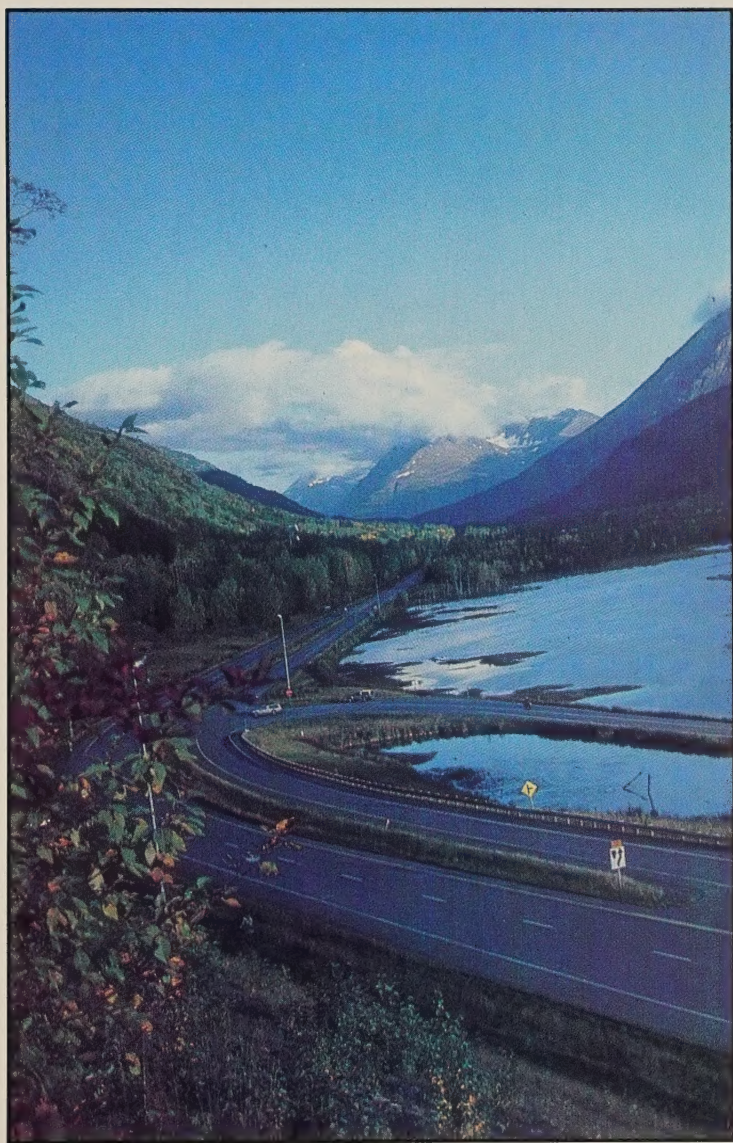
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The Seward National Scenic Byway

Reserve
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Alaska



United States
Department of
Agriculture
Forest Service

Seward
Chamber of
Commerce

Kenai Peninsula
Economic
Development
District

Leaflet R10-RG-51

Your Scenic Byway

For 127 miles, from Anchorage to Seward, it winds through a land of remarkable beauty. It is a land of saltwater bays, frigid-blue glaciers, knife-edged ridges and alpine valleys. This is Alaska's Seward Highway.

The Seward Highway ties Alaska's metropolitan center, Anchorage, with the port of Seward on Resurrection Bay. From Anchorage to Girdwood, the highway borders Turnagain Arm and Chugach State Park. From Girdwood to Seward, it carries visitors through the Chugach National Forest.

Diversity of landscape and wildlife is the hallmark of the highway corridor.

Whether you drive for pleasure, fish, hunt, backpack, camp or ski, the Seward Highway can take you there. And all this is against the backdrop of spruce forests, wildflowers and extraordinary wildlife.

A gravel road linking Seward and Anchorage was completed in 1951. The highway was paved in 1954. In 1990, the highway was recognized for its natural beauty when it was designated as a national scenic byway. It joins a system of more than 100 byways nationwide through magnificent national forests and other federal and state lands.

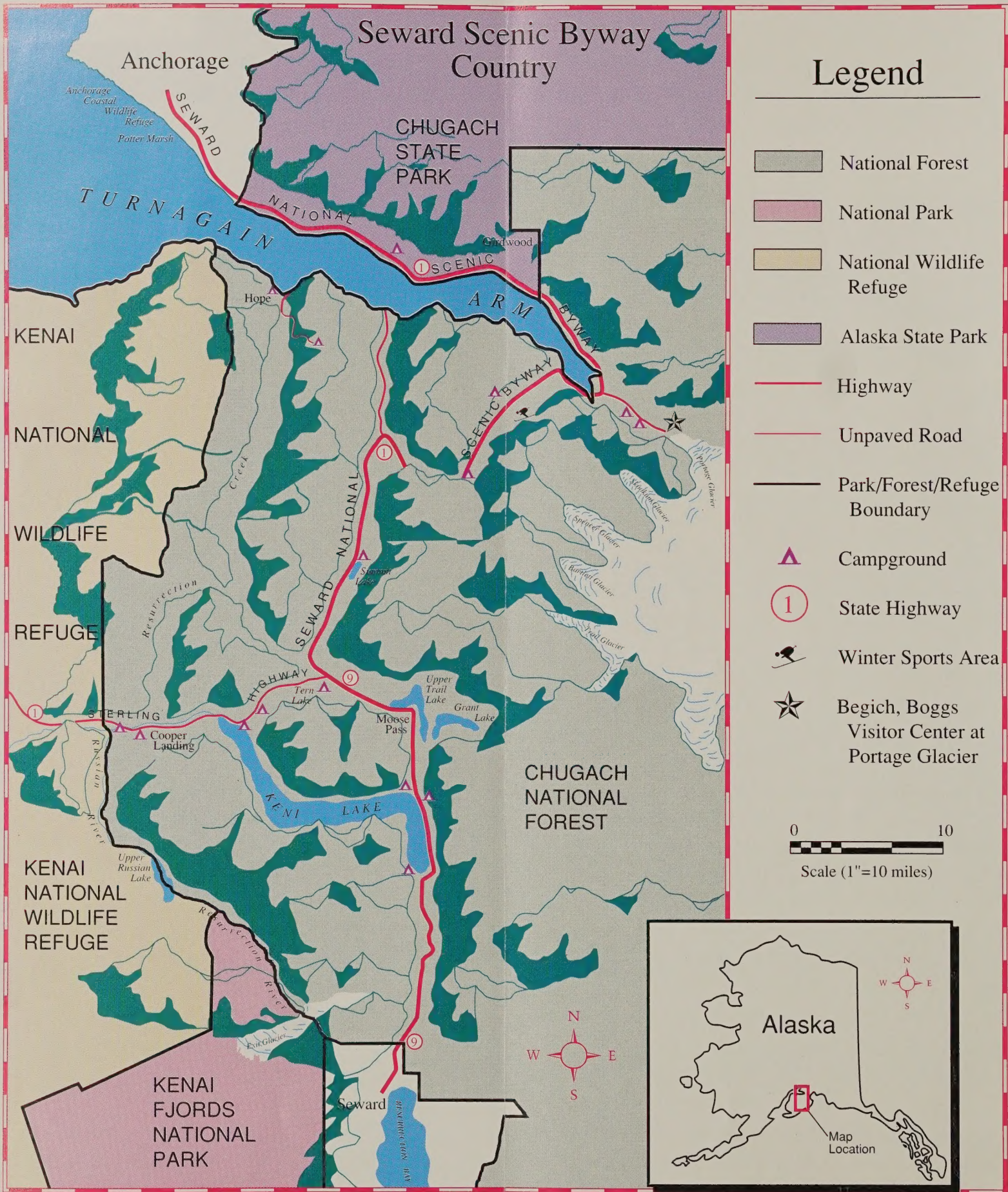
This is your invitation to touch Alaska in all of its splendor—along the Seward National Scenic Byway.

A Natural Showcase

Watch for wildlife along the highway. You may hear the cackling of Canada geese in the wetlands, the whistle of hoary marmots in the alpine valleys and the cry of bald eagles in the dense coastal forests.

Just south of Anchorage, Potter's Marsh Wildlife Viewing Area offers a temporary home to ducks, geese and other nesting water birds as they raise their young.

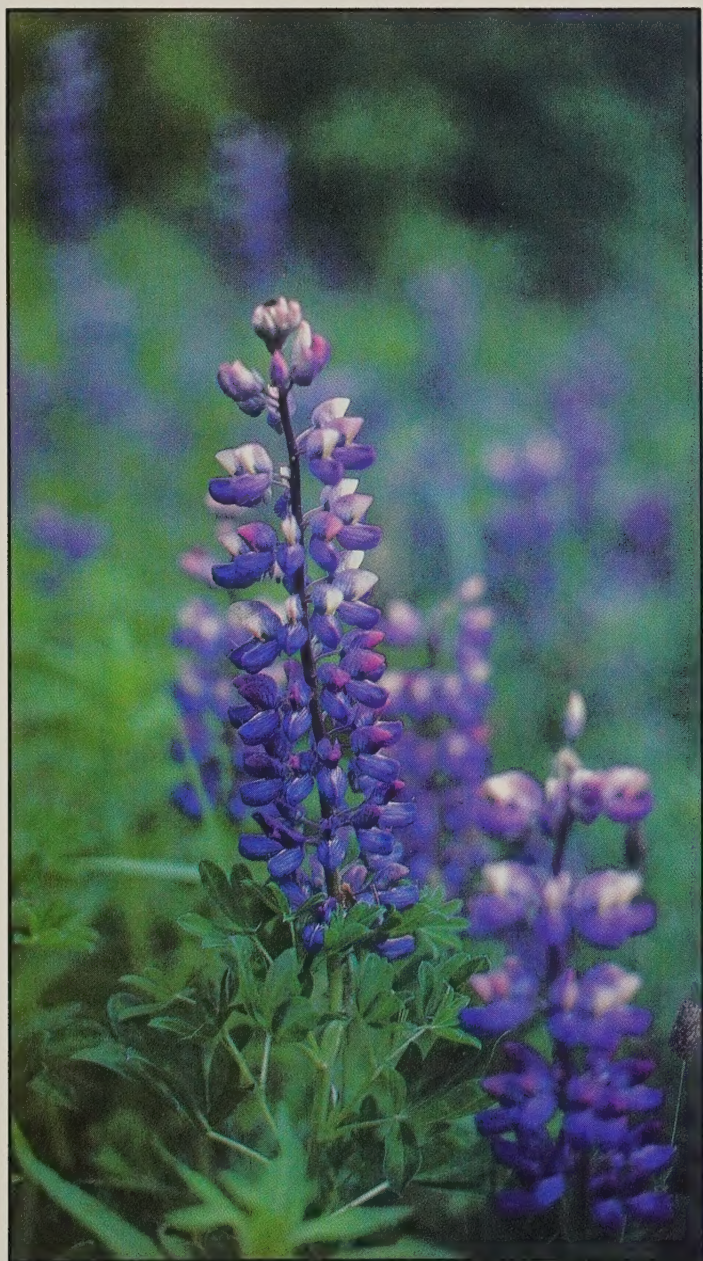
Along Turnagain Arm, you may spot Dall sheep as they scale rugged mountainsides or bring their young



near the highway to forage. Bald eagles, moose, bear, mountain goat, salmon and a variety of birds thrive along the highway.

Many species of wildflowers help beautify the road corridor. Two of the most common and colorful are the blue-purple arctic lupine and pink-red fireweed.

A serious infestation of the spruce bark beetle has killed many spruce stands along the highway route. These dead trees can be identified by their ashy-rust color.



Patches of beautiful arctic lupine carpet areas along the byway. (Forest Service photo by David Allen.)

A Young Land

The Seward Highway traverses rugged country. It is a young land, molded by the forces of wind, water, fire and ice. Ten thousand years ago, much of this land was buried under glacial ice thousands of feet thick. Today's glaciers are mere remnants of the ice that once held dominion here.

Opposing forces still battle in the Kenai and Chugach ranges. While glaciers steadily grind down the mountains, other geologic forces deep in the earth uplift the peaks.

Earthquakes continue to shape this land as they have for millions of years. The 1964 Earthquake, the largest ever recorded in North America, caused some areas along the highway to drop six feet.

At the end of Turnagain Arm, Portage Glacier, Alaska's most visited recreation site, and Exit Glacier, outside of Seward, are great places to experience glaciers first-hand.

In the Footsteps of Others

As you travel along the Seward National Scenic Byway, you are tracing the footsteps of those who have come before us. The route has long linked the Kenai Peninsula to interior Alaska.

Natives first used the area by establishing a hunting camp at Beluga Point along Turnagain Arm about 9,000 years ago. Five hundred years ago, Tanaina Indians travelled the region in search of abundant game.

In the 1700s, Russian explorers sought furs and gold here. While America's Revolutionary War raged, Captain James Cook of England battled dangerous tides in Cook Inlet in 1778. Searching for a northwest passage, a disappointed Cook had to "turn again," leaving the legacy of his name and adventure.

The highway traces part of the famous Iditarod Trail from Seward to Nome. During the wild heyday of the gold stampede in the early 1900s, thousands

of miners grubbed in the muck for wealth along the highway route.

Tracks of the Alaska Railroad are visible along Turnagain Arm. The railroad was completed in 1915 linking the port of Seward to the gold fields of the interior.



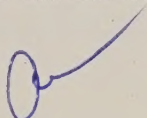
Turnagain Arm bore tides can often be seen from the Seward National Scenic Byway southeast of Anchorage. (Forest Service photo by David Allen)

Turnagain Arm

Bordered by the Chugach and Kenai mountains, silt-laden Turnagain Arm stretches from Anchorage to Portage. The arm, averaging only about 30 feet deep, is known for its hazardous tides and mudflats. Tide variations can reach 42 feet.

Twice each day, the silty waters of Turnagain Arm flush out into Cook Inlet and return. As the outgoing and incoming tides meet, a wall of water, sometimes reaching six feet, is occasionally formed. This breaking wave or “bore tide” sweeps up the arm at ten to fifteen miles per hour.

Beluga whales are occasionally seen rolling at the surface in the arm chasing salmon and sea-run smelt, locally known as “hooligan.”



To Learn More



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For more information about recreation along the Seward National Scenic Byway, contact any of the following organizations:

Seward Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 749
Seward, Alaska 99664

Anchorage Convention & Visitors Bureau
1600 "A" Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-5147

Supervisor's Office
Chugach National Forest
201 East Ninth Avenue, Suite 206
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

For a Safe Trip

Turnagain Arm

Please do not venture onto the mudflats. Extreme tides and quicksand are a deadly combination.

Weather

Alaska's weather is very unpredictable. Be prepared for rain, snow, high winds and cold.

Drive defensively

Some sections of the highway are narrow and winding—all sections are beautiful. Be prepared for vehicles stopped along the road.

Avalanches

Snow avalanches can temporarily close sections of the highway. Be alert and heed all warning signs.

This publication is a cooperative effort of the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District, the Seward Chamber of Commerce and the USDA Forest Service.

Cover photograph of Tern Lake and the Seward National Scenic Byway by Bill Shuster.